

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAB-01 SAM-01

IO-11 SSM-03 ACDA-05 /084 W
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0058

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0907

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT IS US

SUBJECT: RABIN VISIT CONTINUES TO GENERATE DOMESTIC CONTROVERSY

REF: TEL AVIV 0850

BEGIN SUMMARY: CONTRADICTORY REPORTS FROM "SOURCES IN RABIN'S PARTY" REGARDING RABIN'S VIEW ON U.S. TECHNICIANS IN SINAI HAVE ADDED FRESH FUEL TO JOURNALISTIC SPECULATION ABOUT RABIN-PERES CONFRONTATION. LOCAL OBSERVERS HOWEVER DO NOT EXPECT THAT FLAPS ARISING FROM RABIN'S WASHINGTON VISIT PRESAGE POLITICAL CRISIS. END SUMMARY

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. IN WAKE OF CRITICAL LOCAL REACTIONS TO "SENIOR OFFICIAL'S" BACKGROUND REMARKS ON MOD ARMS REQUEST, FRESH CONTROVERSY HAS ARISEN OVER CONTRADICTORY REPORTS REGARDING RABIN'S POSITION ON U.S. TECHNICIANS IN SINAI. AS NOTED IN TODAY'S MEDIA CABLE, MORNING PRESS
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CARRIES STORY ATTRIBUTED TO "SOURCES IN RABIN'S PARTY"

THAT PRIME MINISTER TENDS TO FAVOR ENDING THE ROLE OF U.S. TECHNICIANS POSTED IN SINAI "SHOULD CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT." RABIN REPORTEDLY HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT ON BALANCE PRESENCE OF U.S. TECHNICIANS INVOLVED GREATER LIABILITIES THAN ADVANTAGES. PRESS ACCOUNTS FURTHER CITED THESE "SOURCES" AS SAYING THAT RABIN HAD AGREED TO PRESENCE OF U.S. TECHNICIANS AS PART OF SINAI II OUT OF CONCERN THAT DEFENSE MINISTER PERES OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE OPPOSED THE AGREEMENT.

2. ISRAELI RADIO THIS MORNING CARRIED DENIAL OF ABOVE STORIES BY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, AMOS EIRAN, WHO IS WITH RABIN IN THE U.S. MAARIV FEBRUARY 5 CITES "A RELIABLE SOURCE" IN RABIN'S ENTOURAGE WHO SAID THAT "THE REPORT IS NOT TRUE; THE INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT IS ZNING IMPLEMENTED IN LETTER AND SPIRIT, WITHOUT THE COMMITMENT OF EITHER SIDE BEING WEAKENED." SAME ARTICLE ALSO CONTAINS

REAFFIRMATION BY DAVAR WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT BARNEA THAT RABIN INDEED HAD EXPRESSED HIS RESERVATIONS ON U.S. TECHNICIANS DURING HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE SECRETARY. END UNCLASSIFIED

3. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. FLURRY OVER RABIN'S ALLEGED REMARKS ONSINAI MI HAS MUJH THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS AS FALRE UP EARLIER THIS WEEK OVER MOD ARMS REQUEST. IN BOTH CASES, RABIN APPEARS TO BE AT LOGGERHEADS WITH ISRAELI PRESS CORPS IN U.S. AND TO BE ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITY TO PERES FOR PROBLEM AREAS IN U.S./ISRAELI RELATIONS.

4. POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN THIS WEEK, HOWEVER, DO NOT ANTICIPATE POLITICAL CRISIS AS RESULT OF THESE CONTRETEMPS. CHAIRMAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE COMMITTEE NAVON TOLD US THAT HE EXPECTS LABOR ALIGNMENT TO BE SOLIDLY BEHIND RABIN IN DEFEATING LIKUD VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN KNESSET ON FEBRUARY 9. HE FELT THAT LIKUD HAD MADE TACTICAL MISTAKE BY INTRODUCING NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION INSTEAD OF ALLOWING DISPUTE TO BE THRASHED OUT WITHIN LABOR ALIGNMENT. NAVON ADDED THAT NEITHER PERES
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NOR ANYONE ELSE WAS CURRENTLY CHALLENGING RABIN OR TRYING TO BRING HIM DOWN. EVERYBODY WAS WAITING FOR RABIN'S RETURN SO THAT HE COULD PROVIDE HIS OWN EXPLANATIONS OF WHAT HAD ACTUALLY TRANSPIRED DURING U.S. VISIT. WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN SIMILAR ASSESSMENT BY RELIABLE LOCAL JOURNALIST. WE ALSO NOTE THAT RABIN, ACCORDING TO FEBRUARY 4 MAARIV STORY, HAS ALREADY "EXPLAINED" THAT HIS IMPROMPTU REMARKS RE MOD ARMS

REQUEST WERE NOT AIMED AT EITHER PERES OR THE IDF. IN TURN, PERES HAS MAINTAINED UNRUFFLED PUBLIC PROFILE, MERELY INDICATING THAT HE LOOKS FORWARD TO CLARIFYING "EXACTLY WHO SAID WHAT" WHEN RABIN RETURNS.

5. COMMENT: AS MATTERS LOOK NOW, RABIN IS LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER SOME HEATED CRITICISM IN COURSE OF KNESSET DEBATE AS WELL AS SOME TOUGH QUESTIONING IN CABINET. BUT, CONTRARY TO REPORTS IN CERTAIN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA, WE DO NOT SEE CRISIS LOOMING AHEAD. PREVIOUS ROCKY MOMENTS IN RABIN-PERES RELATIONSHIP (E.G., APPOINTMENT OF SHARON) HAVE NOT PREVENTED THE TWO MEN FROM WORKING WITH EACH OTHER. WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE WITH LOCAL OBSERVERS WHO SEE LATEST FLAREUP AS "POLITICS AS USUAL".
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